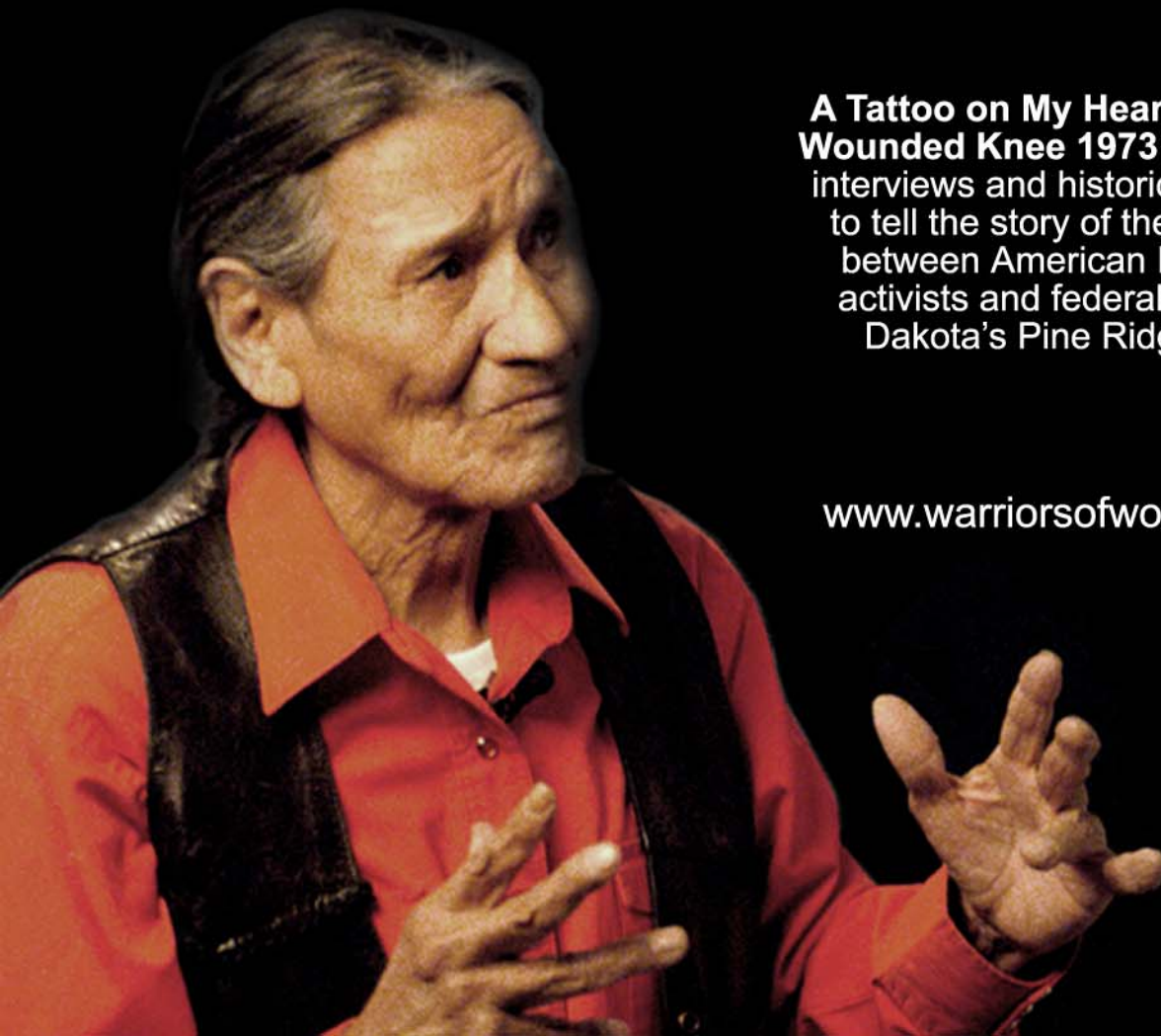


# A TATTOO ON MY HEART

The Warriors of Wounded Knee 1973

**A Tattoo on My Heart: The Warriors of Wounded Knee 1973** uses contemporary interviews and historical archival images to tell the story of the historic stand off between American Indian Movement activists and federal agents on South Dakota's Pine Ridge Reservation.

[www.warriorsofwoundedknee.com](http://www.warriorsofwoundedknee.com)



# A Tattoo On My Heart

the warriors of wounded knee 1973

“.....we were at war with their military.”  
Beau Little



## Historical Overview

### Wounded Knee Massacre, 1890

On December 29, 1890, over 300 Lakota men, women and children were massacred by U.S. Army troops in camp near the Pine Ridge Agency.



Massacre at Wounded Knee

The troops had been ordered to disarm the camp, and when a struggle over a weapon resulted in a shot going off, shooting erupted. Hundreds of the Lakota were torn apart by rapid-fire Hotchkiss cannons and many more were shot by soldiers as they tried to flee. Their frozen bodies were thrown into a pit.

### Wounded Knee 1973

On January 27, 1973, a Lakota man named Wesley Bad Heart Bull is murdered in Buffalo Gap, SD and the white suspect is only charged second-degree manslaughter. Protests in Custer, SD resulted in rioting, with 27 protesters arrested and 11 police officers were injured. Further fighting in nearby Rapid City led to 40 more arrests, including the dead man's mother.



Pine Ridge Tribal chairman Dick Wilson, whose brutal and corrupt administration alienated many on the reservation, secured a court order prohibiting members of the American Indian Movement from speaking at public gatherings. His “goon squad” was accused of acts of intimidation, assault and even murder.

On February 27, 1973, activists decided to take a stand. Several hundred Pine Ridge citizens and AIM members seized control of a church, a trading post and a museum in Wounded Knee, SD, near the site of the 1890 massacre. The group stockpiled food, supplies and firearms and built fortifications. In response, over 200 FBI agents, U.S. Marshals and Bureau of Indian Affairs officers surrounded the encampment. In the months that followed, fire was exchanged between the two groups. Two activists, Buddy LaMonte and Frank Clearwater, were killed. After seventy-one days, a peace agreement was reached and the stand off ended, although the government never completely honored many of the conditions of the pact.





# Classroom Activities

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1. After viewing the documentary film *A Tattoo on My Heart: The Warriors of Wounded Knee 1973* (56 minutes in length), have students make a timeline of the events discussed in the film. Other historical events may be added to clarify the event's place in time.
2. On a map of South Dakota, locate the key points mentioned in the film: Wounded Knee, Pine Ridge, Rapid City, Buffalo Gap and Custer.
3. Research the sweat lodge ceremony.
4. How are the lyrics of the songs "Wounded Knee" and "Indian Wars" used to teach history? ( See lyrics on resources page.)
5. View the documentary film *Lost Bird of Wounded Knee* (30 minutes in length). This film is archived on the SDPB website, [www.sdpb.org](http://www.sdpb.org) in the "Learning" section under Celebrating Native American Culture.

## Discussion Questions

### **A Tattoo on My Heart: The Warriors of Wounded Knee 1973**

1. The film begins with the sound of the howling wind. Why do you think that the filmmaker did this?
2. What are some of the words that come to mind as you see the photographs from the 1890 Massacre at Wounded Knee?
3. There are several photographs and a song about American Indian children attending boarding schools. Why were these boarding schools established? What were some of the problems with them?
4. What were two of the racially motivated incidents that enraged the American Indians to protest in the early 1970's?
5. How did the leadership of the Oglala Tribe add to the frustration of the traditional American Indian elders?
6. Why was Wounded Knee selected as the gathering place for the protest movement led by the American Indian Movement?

7. What was the atmosphere like in Pine Ridge in 1973? What would a person driving through that town have seen at that time?
8. What was the U.S. government's reaction to the caravan arriving at Wounded Knee in 1973? Why do you think they reacted in that way?
9. How was the 1973 standoff at Wounded Knee like the Vietnam War?
10. How was life inside the Wounded Knee bunkers like a community?
11. What was the women's role in the bunkers?
12. The protest at Wounded Knee lasted for 71 days. Why was it difficult for the participants to end their protest?
13. What were the lessons of Wounded Knee?
14. What does it mean to have a tattoo on your heart?
15. How many people were killed during the Wounded Knee standoff?
16. How many people were wounded?
17. How many bullets were exchanged?
18. How do you think that the American Indian's beliefs helped them during the standoff?
19. How is the 1973 standoff at Wounded Knee commemorated each year?

# Resources

## Glossary Words

1. activist-
2. bunker-
3. corruption-
4. massacre-
5. protest-
6. racial-
7. reservation-
8. siege-
9. traditional-

## Song Lyrics

### Wounded Knee

(Originally Boarding School Blues)  
by Floyd Red Crow Westerman

You put me in your boarding school  
There you taught me your White man rules  
Be a fool  
Heya ya hey a ya hey hey

You put me in Chicago one  
cold and windy day  
Relocation  
Extermination  
Heya ya hey a ya hey hey

You took me from my home, my friends  
Think I'll go back there again  
Wounded Knee  
I Want to be free  
Heya ya hey a ya hey hey

### Indian Wars

Out in the desert where the wind never stops  
A few simple people try to grow a few crops  
Trying to maintain a life and a home  
On land that was theirs before the Romans  
thought of Rome

A few dozen survivors, ragged but proud  
With a few woolly sheep, under gathering cloud  
It's never been easy, or free from strife  
But the pulse of the land is the pulse of their life

You thought it was over but it's just like before  
Will there never be an end to the Indian wars?

It's not breech-loading rifles and wholesale  
slaughter  
It's kickbacks and thugs and diverted water  
Treaties get signed and the papers change  
hands  
But they might as well draft these agreements  
in sand

Noble Savage on the cinema screen  
An Indian's good when he cannot be seen  
And the so-called white so-called race  
Digs for itself a pit of disgrace

You thought it was over but it's just like before  
Will there never be an end to the Indian wars?

## Recommended reading

Brown, Dee Alexander. *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971.

Crow Dog, Mary and Erdoes, Richard. *Lakota Woman*. New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990.

Deloria, Vine Jr. *Behind the Trail of Broken Treaties: An Indian Declaration of Independence*. New York: Delacorte, 1974.

Marshall, Joseph M. "Wounded Knee Takeover, 1973." *Encyclopedia of North American Indians*.  
[http://college.hmco.com/history/readerscomp/naind/html/na\\_043800\\_woundedkneet.htm](http://college.hmco.com/history/readerscomp/naind/html/na_043800_woundedkneet.htm)

Matthiessen, Peter. *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*. New York: Viking, 1983.

Sansom Flood, Renee. *Lost Bird of Wounded Knee: Heroic Spirit of the Lakota*. New York: Scribner, 1995.

Mooney, James. *The Ghost Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991.

Robertson, Paul M. "Wounded Knee Massacre, 1890." *Encyclopedia of North American Indians*.  
[http://college.hmco.com/history/readerscomp/naind/html/na\\_043700\\_woundedkneem.htm](http://college.hmco.com/history/readerscomp/naind/html/na_043700_woundedkneem.htm)

*Tattoo on My Heart: The Warriors of Wounded Knee 1973* has been featured at a number of prestigious film festivals, including, the ImageNation Native American Film Festival in Vancouver, British Columbia and the Palm Springs Native American Film Festival.

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For more information about the film, go to: [www.warriorsofwoundedknee.com](http://www.warriorsofwoundedknee.com)

Brett Lawlor, Producer, Badlands Films  
Rapid City, South Dakota

Charlie Abourezk, Co-director and Co-producer  
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